

## Do You Have a Slough of Great Ideas?

I had lunch the other day with a friend of mine who had taken a new job with another insurance company. I was looking forward to discussing his new opportunity, the challenges he had already identified and how he intended to go about making improvements. Instead of talking about the future, however, he just talked about his old job and how disappointed he was.

At first I thought he was disappointed in the way his old company performed and how they treated him. That wasn't the situation. He was disappointed in himself and what he hadn't accomplished. It wasn't that he hadn't accomplished anything. He had done quite a bit and should have been proud of his accomplishments. Instead, he couldn't let go of several changes he wanted to make but never got to. He blamed others; the company, its culture, timing, never enough money. He talked about himself as if he were victim of these outside events. But, in the end, he knew he was the real reason why his ideas were never put into action.

I wonder how many of us have a list of great ideas that are sitting stagnant in our minds waiting for some unknown catalyst to bring them out into the light of day. Improvement ideas in our industry are not like fine wine. They tend not to improve with age. Take a risk. Give it a shot. Put a plan together that will take one of your ideas out of your mind and put it to work.

Here are some ways to increase your chances of having your idea accepted and successful:

- Make sure you've thought the idea through carefully and you can explain it simply and easily. Write and rehearse several explanations. You should be able to give a good summary of it in less than 3 minutes and a more complete explanation in less than ten.
- Make sure there's a financial benefit from your change and then quantify it. You don't need to do a complete financial cost/benefit analysis at the introduction of an idea – it can be done later -- but you need to know if the change will make good financial sense.
- Create a sense of immediacy and urgency for your solution. If there's no compelling reason to implement your idea *now* it will likely languish and die. Everyone in today's world is busy and probably understaffed. You need to make your idea so important and relevant that it can't be ignored or postponed.
- Test the waters and gain support for your idea. Gain a sponsor or sponsors for your idea. Identify who will be threatened by this change and find a way to get them on your side if possible. It's important to have both general and formal support for a new venture.
- Put an implementation plan together, with the help of others if appropriate, and get approval for the resources needed to move forward. Keep everyone focused on the results this change will make and ensure you get them.
- When you're finished, make sure you celebrate the success. Give everyone else credit.

The single most important way to successfully make improvements in a company is give everyone else credit. Don't worry about your credit. It will come. Instead, start on your next idea.

One last idea – sometimes your best contribution is to clearly identify a problem that needs to be fixed and then to bring in an expert to help you find and implement the solution. When this is the case, feel free to give us a call. We do this all the time and would love to help.

Also, please visit our web sight at [McDonaldConsultingGroup.com](http://McDonaldConsultingGroup.com), where you'll find further explanations of these ideas (and other exciting ideas) in our Concepts and Ideas section.